

Secrets of the Past Revealed

by Illyandria V

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Summary: Hercules catches Ares and Xena doing...um...something, and Xena must tell the tale of her past.

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Title: Secrets of the Past Revealed

> Author: Illyandria
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> Sex: No, poor Ares doesn't make it that far.
 Profanity: Yeah, a bit.

> Violence: I don't think so..
 Dedication: To Sara, Sarah, and Kat.

> Author's Note: Takes place after "The Deliverer".

> ~*~

> She smiled slightly in the dim light, knowing he was there. He was always thereâ€|even after all she had doneâ€|

> Slowly, she slid the straps of the shift from her shoulders...lowering it over her breasts...past her hips...and then to the floor. Running her hands lazily through her hair, she stepped towards the bathing tub, feeling the air get hotter as she neared the water. Carefully, she lowered herself into the steaming tub. She casually walked towards the other side, taking water in her hands and pouring it over her upper body. Before she reached the other side, however, two large hands grasped her arms, pulling her back to where she had come. As he spun her around, her eyes traveled over his glorious body, feeling somewhat privileged in the fact that he wanted her out of all the women he could have...and she knew he could have anyone. As her eyes went up, they met his dark brown ones...so deep...so dark...so dangerous...so sexy.

> He stared into her crystal blue eyes, the ones that had defied him only a few days ago. She knew he would forgive her, as he always did. But as he gazed into her eyes, he could sense that something was differentâ€|that in this encounter she was not going to pull away.

> He ran his hands down her arms, delighted as it produced a shiver

from her. His hands lowered to her thighs as he began to lower himself to sit on the bottom of the tub. He caressed her long legs softly, and stared up at her from below, the water up to his shoulders. His eyes grazed over her body hungrily, and he reached up and grasped her hand in his, pulling her to him.

> Her eyes had been set on his as his hands had trailed down her body. Now, he pulled her from the trance, and she looked down at him with a small grin on her face. She lowered herself down into the water, arms wrapping around his neck as her legs straddled his hips.

> He met her descending lips, tongue immediately slipping through them. They kissed passionately, taking out on each other all of the frustration caused by years of being alone. Of being rejected. Of searching for redemption and never finding it. In that kiss, they again remembered who they were...and how they needed each other.

> He broke the kiss, leaving her breathless, and moved down, kissing the sides of her neck, and the bottom. She threw her head back, allowing him access to her breast, and he continued his ministrations.

> She closed her eyes, feeling his hand move down her stomach...and down further...

> Suddenly, a burst of light filled the room as the door was flung open. None other than Hercules, the same man who tore them apart, stood in the doorway.

> Ares' head flew up, as did Xena's. She turned around towards the door, squinting in the unwanted light.

> Hercules stood there for a moment, mouth hung open, eyes boring into the two. "Xena," he finally sputtered, "what in Tartarus do you think you're doing?!" He ran over to the tub, pulling her roughly away from Ares' arms. "What do you think you were doing to her?" he spat out, his glaring eyes now focused on Ares.

> Ares was hardly paying attention to his half brother, instead gazing at Xena, seeing her regretful look. His apologetic eyes met hers, and then shifted back to Hercules, hardening as they stared up at him.

> Softly, he stated, "It's my fault, Hercules. Yeah. I seduced her. I tried to rape her." He did his best not to show his sarcasm, trying to protect Xena from the furious questioning that was sure to come if they thought she had participated willingly.

> Hercules glared down at him, a look of disgust on his features. "I knew --"

> "No," Xena spoke up, voice hardly above a whisper. "He didn't try to rape me. I wanted him." Hercules gaped at her as she spoke, and she smiled halfway. "I'm a big girl, Hercules. I know what I'm doing."

> There was silence for a brief second as Hercules tried to think of something to say. In that moment, Iolaus appeared in the doorway, stopping there to catch his breath. His eyes took in the sight of Hercules...a naked Xena (here he blushed ever-so-slightly)...and an angry looking Ares. He looked back at Hercules, and winced as he saw the Medusa-gaze he was giving the two.

> "Xena, what could you possibly have been thinking?! This is Ares! The bastard that hurt you thousands of times! The bad guy! The villain! What in Tartarus were you doing?!"

> "Well, to put it simply, what I was doing was --"

> Hercules cut her off, knowing very well what she was about to say. "I know that part, Xena! But this is the man you hate!"

> "Obviously you don't know her very well," Ares said dryly.

> "Oh, like you know her better!"

> "I do!"

> "Hercules," Xena said tiredly, "there are a lot of things you don't know about me...especially my past."

> There was silence for a moment, and then she spoke again, looking over at Ares. "I'll see you later, okay, Ares?"

> He nodded. "Of course, My Princess," he murmured, and disappeared.

> Xena looked over at Hercules. Before she could say anything, Iolaus ran between the two, hands outstretched to keep them away from one another. He quickly grabbed a towel on a nearby chair and tossed it to Xena, who wrapped it around herself.

> "Xena," Hercules said, "I really don't understand. What did you think you were doing? That was Ares. Ares. Your enemy. The man that killed my wife! The man that tries to kill me again and again!"

> Xena scowled at him. "Strife killed Serena. Not Ares."

> Hercules shook his head. "He's evil, Xena."

> "He's war! What do you expect?! Do you expect him to prance around helping people like you do?"

> "How can you...want...somebody like that? He kills thousands of people!"

> Xena shook her head, turning away from her long time friend. "You don't understand. If you knew anything about my past you'd see how much he means to me." Without looking at either of them, she walked to the other side of the room where her armor laid. She allowed the towel to fall to the ground, and then slipped a clean shift over her head. As she was replacing her leathers, she could hear Iolaus and Hercules speaking quietly.

> "Herc, why did you burst in her like that anyway?"

> There was a pause, as if he was still trying to get over the shock. After the pause there was a loud curse.

> "A man ran up to me outside and told me the neighboring town was under attack. I came in here to get Xena so we could go stop it."

> Xena frowned to herself and a tired sigh escaped her lips as she put on the last of her armor. She almost turned around, but realized that her chakram was still sitting on the table. Staring wistfully down at the beautiful gift, she ran her fingers across it gently, and then hooked it in its place. She turned back around just soon enough to see a man running into the room.

> "The warlord has retreated!"

> Hercules and Iolaus stared at the man.

> "My village is safe! There is no need for your help now!" The man ran out, and they heard him yelling all the way down the road, "My village is safe! My village is safe! The warlord retreated! The warlord retreated!"

> Xena smiled, looking up at the ceiling briefly, mouthing a silent 'thank you'.

> ~*~

> The wind blew her hair about as she rode across the grassy meadow. Sometimes it just helped to take Argo out and ride like she had no worries. It managed to soothe her mind for a little while, and gave her a sense of peace.

> But this time, memories tugged at her. Oh, she used to ride with Ares. For hours they'd just ride. No wars to worry about, no battle plans, no soldiers to take care of. Just them, their horses, and the open plain.

> She could still remember Ares' black mare, Alana. The first, and basically only, gift he'd gotten from his father. And Argo was the

first gift Ares had given her.

> What was she to do? How was she supposed to explain the sudden need for her long-time 'enemy'?

> "I'll just have to tell Hercules about our past," Xena muttered to herself. "He'll have to understand."

> She pulled on Argo's reins and turned her sharply around. Closing her eyes, she let Argo gallop back to the inn where Hercules and Iolaus were staying.

> ~*~

> After taking Argo back to the stables, Xena stood outside the door to their room. Taking a deep breath, she opened the door.

> Hercules was pacing around, and Iolaus was sitting on a chair looking irritated with his friend. When Xena opened the door, all eyes shot up at her.

> Hercules ran over to her, looking angry. "Where did you go, Xena?" he demanded. "You were gone for so long that we didn't know where you were! You were with Him, weren't you?!"

> Xena's eyebrows rose furiously. "What? How dare you accuse me of that, Hercules! I was out riding! I rode a long distance before I realized it, okay? It calms me down! I wasn't with Him!"

> Hercules studied her carefully, and then turned while mumbling, "Sorry, I was just worried."

> Xena closed the door behind her, and sat down on a chair, hands fidgeting. When she realized she was doing this, she stopped and looked up at Hercules. His back was turned to her. She looked over at Iolaus. He was looking from Hercules to Xena, wondering what was going to happen next.

> "Hercules," Xena said, and he turned to look at her. "We need to talk."

> He nodded shortly, and sat down on a chair. "What about?"

> "My past."

> Hercules let out a very short, nervous chuckle, knowing he wouldn't like what he heard. "Alright."

> "I guess I should start at the very beginningâ€¦"

> When I was fifteen years old, I already had the warrior spirit. My younger brother Lyceus and I were always training with swords, much to my mother and older brother Toris's dismay. Then, one night, word was out that a warlord was to attack our village. This man's name is Cortese. It was by his hand that I lost Lyceus. Andâ€¦my brotherâ€¦he was part of me. He was my best friend, he was the one I always turned to, he was the only one in that village that understood how I felt. And then, like a hand sweeping over the skies and destroying the sun, I lost the bright part of my life. My brother. The one who kept me going when I was discouraged. He was gone.

> I was devastated; not able to eat, sleep, or even fight. I was numb all over; a shell of the person I once was. When the time came for Lyceus to be laid into his stone coffin, I couldn't go. It hurt too much. But, that night, I visited him. I was crying over his coffin when I felt a presence. It feltâ€¦well, I can't explain it. I knew somebody was watching me from behind. So I turned. Nobody there. I whispered 'show yourself' to the intruder, and a man appeared. He was dressed in all black leather and silver. His hair, black as night, was short. A powerful looking sword was by his side, and his hand was carelessly laying on it. He had dark eyesâ€¦it felt as if I was looking into nothingâ€¦but so much. It's hard to explain. And though I'd never seen him before, I felt as if I'd known him all of my life.

> He stepped closer to me, until there was hardly any space separating our bodies. He lifted his hand and raised it to my face, wiping away the tears that were still streaming down. My body calmed

down at his touch, and I stared at him, in awe. When I found my voice I asked him who he was. He replied to me 'I am Ares, God of War, at your service'. I tried to step back, but I only found my feet held back by the coffin. I asked him what he was doing there. He told me that he knew what I wanted. He knew my dreams. And he told me that he could make them come true. He said that he would make me a warrior, if I would join him. He said that if I went back to the village I would find nothing. My mother wouldn't accept me into her home, and Toris would kill me on sight. I didn't believe him entirely and asked if he would still welcome me if I waited until I was sure. He said he would wait for me for a millennia if it took that long. So I went back to my village.

> I was greeted exactly how he had told me I would be. My mother threw me out of the house, and when Toris saw me in the village he tried to hurt me. But he didn't succeed in that little trial. I beat him up pretty badly, and he ran home with pure hatred etched in his features.

> I ran out of the village, and into the woods. I ran for what seemed like eternity before I finally broke down, laying underneath a tree and crying.

> I didn't call for Ares, but he came nonetheless. Not wanting to show weakness in front of the God of War, I tried to stop the tears, but I couldn't. He told me that it was alright, and that I should let it out. We appeared in his palace on his bed a moment later, and I cried myself to sleep in his arms.

> He was going to make me a warrior. But first he had to help me cope with the loss of my brother. It wasn't an easy task, and I got angry at him easily when I shouldn't have, and it resulted in more sword fights than I'd like to remember. Finally, I was ready, after he convinced me that life went on. So we started our training.

> Ares taught me how to flip, kick, punch, and everything else. He waited until I was ready to do everything. At first, yes, it was a mentorstudent relationship. But through our similarities I came to understand him. I understood his life, what he was, and why people thought the way they did about him. He was protective of me; never wanted to hurt me. I trusted him completely, and I learned to love him. And so, we became more than what we were in the beginning. On my sixteenth birthday he gave me my chakramâ€|and that was the first night we made love.

>
 I led his army into battle for so many years. I wanted people to pay for how much I had suffered. I was driven by hatredâ€|but I was also driven by love.

>
 After one year of leading his army, I became his Chosen. We held the ritual and I pledged myself to him. I swore to him I was his, and that I would never leave him. I broke that promise.

>
 I wanted to go to sea. I'm not sure why, but the life I was living began to bore me. I hated the men in my army. And when I decided to leaveâ€|Ares wouldn't go with me. He said that a pirate was not a true warrior, and that I was capable of more than what I was doing. I begged him to go with me, but he wouldn't. He got angry with me, and I didn't see him again for years.

>
 I went to sea without him, and became a pirate. I met Caesar, Borias, Lao Ma, and Alti during and after this time. Caesar broke my legs and my spirit. I had a son by Borias. Alti promised me I would be the Destroyer of Nations. And Lao Ma healed my legs and my soul as best she could.

>
 After Alti was gone, Caesar back to Rome, Borias dead, and Lao Ma a part of the past, I went back to Greece. I reconciled with Ares, and he gave me an army. Soon, he forgave me completely, understanding why I went out. We were together again, but I was not the woman he

once knew. I had become hard, heartless, and uncaring to *him*. Yeah, when I led his army before I was like that to everybodyâ€|but not to *him*. He could sense the change, and he wanted me back. He wanted who I used to be. The girl that he always protected, confided in, and everything else. But I had changed. He stayed away from me mostly, letting me do whatever pleased me. He hardly ever appeared, and we drifted farther and farther apart.

>
 And then, you guys came along. My men turned against me, and I went through the Gauntlet. I became a fighter for the greater good. I became as I used to be. More or less. I didn't lead armies, and I wasn't cruel to most. But I still enjoyed the kill, and I still enjoyed the fight, and I still was as flawless as I was before. You had brought back the old me, the one that Ares loved. So he wanted me back. When I told him I couldn't fight on his side again, he just stared at me. Finally he whispered 'Your pledge has been broken, but our bond can never be. I will always love you. But you are still mine. That promise will last forever.'

>
 I've betrayed our bond time and time again. Most recently when I didn't trust him, even though I should have known he was being truthful. Pride has driven us to things that never should have taken place. I didn't believe him because I didn't want toâ€|and people paid for my mistake. Gabrielle was impregnated by Dahakâ€|and forced to kill the daughter that resulted.

>
 And as many times as I have hurt himâ€|as many times as I have betrayed himâ€|he still loves me. He's forgiven me even when I didn't deserve it. I have no right to be his Chosen right nowâ€|I have no right to even speak his name as much as I've slandered it. Yet his devotion doesn't falter.

>
 When you interrupted Hercules, I was beginning to see things clearly. I can't run from how I feel any longer. I can't hide the emotions that he stirs every time I see him. It's time for all of us to accept the inevitable. I'm going to be with him.

>
 I know you've never liked him, but if anybody knew him as I do, they could not hate him. He is not to fault for the fact that he is the God of War. He did not choose to be, and he cannot help the instincts that came with the title. He does enjoy the kill, but only as much as I. He is capable of hate, but he *isn't* hate. He is capable of love, and of forgiveness, and I believe that with all of my heart. If I ever doubt that I just have to think about what he saidâ€| 'Your pledge has been broken, but our bond can never be. I will always love you. But you are still mine. That promise will last forever.'

>
 And I am still his. My heart, my mind, and my soul belong to him.

>
 You can at least try to get along. He has reason to dislike you, but not as much as he does. He should also thank you, but you know how pride does get in the way. You brought me back, but in doing so, you took me away from him. And he knows I'm never coming back as a warlord. But I will go back to him as a lover. I can't help how I feel about himâ€| I need him."

>
 When she was finished speaking, she leaned back in her chair and looked Hercules straight in the eyes, waiting for a response.

>
 And boy did she get one.

>
 Hercules jumped up from his chair, and started pacing the length of the room. "Xena, have you gone mad?! This is Ares we're talking about! Ares! Ares! What in Tartarus are you thinking? You can't love him! And you know he doesn't love you! That monster is incapable of love! He has you under some spell! He doesn't love you! Xena, he's a murdering bastard! He kills thousands of innocent lives in a heartbeat, and he doesn't regret what he does! He's tried to get

you back so many times, and he's hurt you while doing that! Snap out of it! You do *not* love him!"

>
 Xena waited patiently for him to finish, and then spoke again. "I do love him."

>
 "He is the one that turned you into the ruthless bitch that you were! He made you lose your innocence! He almost conquered the whole world to rule by fear before I came along!"

>
 "He didn't make me who I was. I condemned myself."

>
 Hercules shook his head furiously. "He's trying to keep you from seeing the truth! He's trying to keep us apart! He's not giving you a chance to love me!"

>
 Xena stared up at the raging hero, shock evident in her eyes. She grimaced, for she'd known he'd be hurtâ€|but not this hurt.

>
 "He's not trying to do anything, Hercules. I love him. Even if I'd known you before I'd known himâ€|I'd still love him. He's in my bloodâ€|he's a part of my soul. Nothing can keep me from him, Hercules, not even you. He's not as evil as you say."

>
 Hercules scowled at her. "If you actually have the nerve to defend that bastard to me, then we have no business being friends." That said, he stormed out the door.

>
 Xena looked over at Iolaus.

>
 He shrugged. "Give him some time to cool down, I guess."

>
 ~*~

>
 Hercules paced around the stables, hands behind his back, an angry glare on his face.

>
 "How dare she defend him to me! He's done something to her! That bastard!" Hercules roared to no one but himself.

>
 But, someone else was listening, and that person appeared next to his angry half brother. "Bastard? Look who's talking."

>
 Hercules whirled around to meet the gaze of the God of War. "You! What have you done to her?"

>
 Ares shook his head. "Me? I have done nothing. She told you the story, Hercules, now why can't you believe it?"

>
 Hercules was silent.

>
 "Is it because you don't want to accept it?"

>
 The hero rolled his eyes at the god before him. "What's going on, Ares? You don't talk like this! What are you up to?"

>
 "What am I up to? I'm trying to explain to you what's going on with Xena. That's what I'm up to. I'm trying to tell you that I feel for her like she does for me. I'm trying to tell you that I've done some pretty bad stuff to you, and to her. And I'm trying to apologize."

>
 Eyeing him carefully, Hercules asked, "What do you mean, apologize?"

>
 "I mean that I'm sorry."

>
 "Yeah, right. And I'm an insane bacchae."

>
 "Hercules, I thought you were supposed to be the rational one. Start acting like it."

>
 "I am the rational one. I am thinking rationally. I know that you're a murderous monster, and I know that you'd never apologize. Why would you?"

>
 "Because I know what I've done was wrong. Because I want you to accept that I love Xena."

>
 "You don't love her!"

>
 "On the contrary, dear brother, I do. But I know that you love her, too. That's why you're acting like this. That's why you stormed out of the inn. Because you hate the fact that Xena loves me and not you. But, Hercules, if you continue to act like this, you'll lose her friendship. You don't want that to happen. She does love you, but in a different way. She cares about you. Don't destroy that."

>
 Hercules stared at him for a long time, and then turned away, shaking his head.

>
 "Hercules, I know I've done wrong. Because of that I can't ask you to forgive me, and I can't ask you to accept me. I've hurt you; I've hurt her. I let Strife kill Serena, I've tried to kill you before. But you're still here, right?"

>
 "If you love her, why did you hurt her, Ares?" Hercules asked finally, voice hoarse.

>
 Ares closed his eyes briefly, shaking his head in remorse.

"Because I was an idiot. I was a fucked up idiot. I wasn't there when she needed me the mostâ€¦ But, Hercules, you haven't seen the whole story. The games that we playâ€¦ she's always ready for themâ€¦ we just do it for sport, if you will. She didn't trust me for a long time, and I'm not sure what persuaded her to recently. She never let me get too close. But I never let myself hurt her when we do this. But, you are right. I have hurt her, just not the way you are thinking. When she went off to seaâ€¦ I let her go alone. I didn't come to her again for yearsâ€¦ and by that time, it was too late. The woman I loved was gone. Hercules, she'd become like me, and I didn't want that. She was ruthless, she killed for the hell of it, she had no mercy. And then you came alongâ€¦" Ares almost smiled. "You changed her, Hercules. She was right, I should thank you. Screw pride for now, right? Thank you. You brought her back. You took her away from my ways, but you didn't take her away from me entirely. Our bond is as strong as ever."

>
 The two half-brothers stood in silence for awhile, each regarding the other with searching eyes. Ares looked up suddenly as he heard a noise from the door.

>
 Xena stepped into the stables, looking at the two with uncertainty. She walked over to Ares, standing beside him, and then looked from him to Hercules.

>
 Hercules watched her, emotions playing across his face. "I just want you to be happy," he said finally. "I don't want you to get hurt."

>
 Xena nodded, a soft smile on her face.

>
 "I just wish you loved meâ€¦" Hercules mumbled, as Xena wrapped her arms around him in a tight hug.

>
 Ares watched his princess, mind at ease for the first time in a long time. What was the future to bring? Would his feud with Hercules end? Would he be able to be with her without worrying about what the others were saying?

>
 As Xena broke the embrace, Hercules turned back to Ares. With newfound confidence, he offered his hand to the god.

>
 Ares was taken aback, but without hesitation, accepted the offer of peace. He shook his brother's hand, and then stepped back, a grin on his face. He looked over at Xena, and spread his arms out, welcoming her into them.

>
 She wrapped her arms around his neck, closing her eyes and breathing deeply. It was as if they were both in the perfect dream. Finally, at long last, they were togetherâ€¦ and nothing could separate them now. They'd been through everything imaginable, and yet, they still loved each other. Nothing would ever overpower them. Nothing would tear them apart again.

>
 Ares held her to him tightly, in paradise as he felt her lift her head up and kiss him passionately. Even though he was in shock, he wasn't too shocked to return her kiss.

>
 Everything was happening so fast for Xena. She was standing in a stable with two men that were madly in love with her, she was in the arms of the one that she loved, they'd confessed to Hercules and to themselves how they feltâ€¦ It was too good to be true.

>
 ~*~
>
 FOUR MONTHS LATER
>
 Hercules, Iolaus, and Xena were now at the palace of King Larkalan, attending his coronation. The new King's father had died, leaving his first heir - a boy of only fifteen summers - to rule the land. Larkalan's father had been a friend of Hercules, and now Hercules thought it his responsibility to stay there for awhile. Xena was to leave in a couple day's time, and meet Gabrielle back in Corinth. But, at the moment, she was in her quarters in the palace, getting ready for bed.
>
 As her shift fell to the floor, he appeared on her bed, clothed only in his leather pants. She turned to face him, walking over to him shamelessly, and crawling onto the bed, looking like a panther stalking its prey. She lifted herself onto him, legs straddling his.
>
 Ares' gaze was fixed on her magnificent body, but now looked up into her eyes as she leaned forward to kiss him. His tongue slipped through her lips and his hands roamed her back as he made his clothing disappear.
>
 A moment after it all had started, a knock came at the door.

>
 Xena groaned but Ares didn't let the kiss end.
>
 Another knock. And then a voice.
>
 "Xena? Xena, are you still awake? King Larkalan requests to see youâ€|"
>
 It was Hercules.
>
 Ares pulled away this time, a grin on his face despite the fact they had been interrupted.
>
 "Hercules!" he shouted from his place on the bed. "I do hope this is not becoming a habit!"
>
 Outside the door, Hercules' face reddened as he heard Ares' voice. "Sorry!"
>
 "Nah, that's okay! By all means, come join us!"
>
 Xena made a face and laughed.
>
 "No, really! Rumors are thatâ€|"
>
 Xena's laughter turned to hysterics as she tried to breathe.

>
 Outside, Hercules' face reddened even more.
>
 Overall, life was good. Ares and Hercules had made up, Ares and Xena were together, Iolaus no longer had to separate anybody. Yeah, life was good.
>
 ~*~
>
 THE END

End
file.